BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *rōnin*

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi *ryū dōjō* destroyed by Itō-*ryū*.

SORI
A ninja who was Rin's father's closest friend. He supposedly gave up his sword for the arts

MAGATSU
Former Itō *ryū* swordsman

SHIRA
Terrifyingly sadistic Akagi assassin

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu* mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupted lord Manji vowed to slay 1 000 evil men in exchange for the release of death

Two years earlier when her parents were murdered on her fourteenth birthday by Anotsu Kagehisa's Itō *ryū* swordsmen Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* fifty years before A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu a similar quest now haunts Rin Upon learning of Manji she enlisted his aid to destroy the Itō *ryū* and avenge her parents

Last issue

As Hyakurin recovers from the injuries she sustained at the hands of the Itō-*ryū* she dreams of life before her time with the Mugai-*ryū* She is haunted by the memories of her son's murder at the hands of her husband. Hyakurin recalls how Gichi and the Mugai *ryū* saved her from execution after she was convicted for the revenge killing of her husband. She wakes to find herself under the watchful eye of Gichi who has treated her wounds. Gichi tells her of Shinuy's death The two resolve to take greater care when confronting the Itō-*ryū* in the future And the story continues

designer DEBRA BAILEY assistant editor MICHAEL CARRIGLITTO editor TIM ERVIN-GORE publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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無限の住人

FALL FROST

– part one –

A GUY WEARING THAT...? NAW, NOT HERE.
OH, WELL. THANKS ANYWAY.
BY THE WAY... NEED SOME SANDALS?
NOPE. GOT PLENTY.

WALKING AROUND ALL DAY, EVERY DAY...
LIVING ON RICE AND GREENS...
.....
.....
MAN...
THIS IS GETTING OLD.

DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE SO HARD TO LIVE WITHOUT USING MY SWORD.
GO BACK TO THE FARM. MAYBE...?
HUH... TALKING ABOUT WIMPING OUT... NO WAY!
JUST YOU WAIT. O-REN...

.....
HMM...
!

I AM AN *ARTIST*, AS YOU CAN SEE.
DON'T MIND ME. JUST CARRY ON.
.....
.....
.....

THE SAMURAI, DOWN ON HIS LUCK, DOES WHAT HE HAS TO IN ORDER TO SURVIVE... YES?
...NOT EXACTLY RŌNIN, EITHER.
I'M NOT A SAMURAI. BUT...
ME...?
WHY SHOULD I TELL YOU?
THEN... WHAT ARE YOU?

HRM.
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO, THAT'S FINE.
I DON'T REALLY CARE.
DRAW YOUR LITTLE PICTURES THERE, OKAY?
I CAN'T CON-CENTRATE WITH YOU HERE. SORRY.
...GO DOWN THE ROAD TO TOWN. IT'S FULL OF 'EM.
IF YOU WANT TO DRAW CRAFTS-MEN...
LOOK, PAL.

HEY. ARE YOU LIS--
OH, I HEARD YOU.
I JUST FINISHED.
THANK YOU FOR COOPERATING.
WANT TO JEE?

壹
貳

.....
.....?
I WAS EXTRAPOLATING HAIR STYLES.

I LIKE YOUR HEAD. EXEMPLARY REBELLION.
IN TWO HUNDRED YEARS, YOUR STYLE WILL BE ALL THE RAGE.

I'M PARTICULARLY FOND OF NUMBER THREE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

AH?!
HEY, BUDDY.
I WANNA HAVE A LITTLE TALK WITH YOU. OUT BACK OF THE SHRINE.
JUST THOUGHT I'D KNOCK SOME SENSE INTO HIM. SO I GAVE HIM A WOODEN PRACTICE SWORD.
WELL, SHIT... I WASN'T GOING TO CUT HIM UP.
AND SO...?

AND WHO LOST...?
.....
.....
ME.
HAW HAW HAW
HAW HAW HAW
C'MON-- IT'S ECHOING OFF THE HILLS!
CUT IT OUT, MAN! IT AIN'T THAT FUNNY!

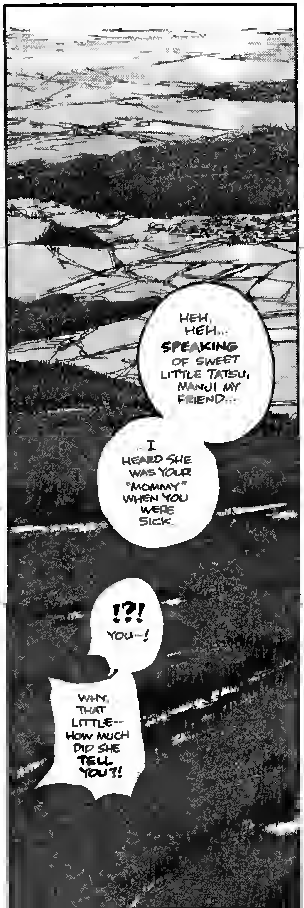
COME ON, MANJI.
YOU KNOW HIM, TOO, RIGHT? WHAT HE'S *REALLY* LIKE?
HEH HEH
YEAH, I KNOW HIM.
STILL, THAT'S PRETTY DAMN FUNNY. THE HOT-SHIT YOUNG BLADE TRIES TO THUMP SOME GEEZER, AND GETS HIS BUTT KICKED-UP, DOWN, AND SIDEWAYS. HOW COME YOU AIN'T CUT YOUR BELLY...?
GET REAL.
SHINET ARTS
AND SO... WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU FLUNG YOURSELF AT HIS FEET? "OH, MASTER! I ADORE YOUR SWORDWORK! MAKE ME YOUR STUDENT!"
I DID *NOT!*
LAY OFF ME, PAL!
ALTHOUGH... A *MONTH* AGO, WHO KNOWS? BUT NO TIME FOR THAT, NOW.
LET'S SEE...
HOH... THIS MAN KILLED YOUR *FRIEND*?

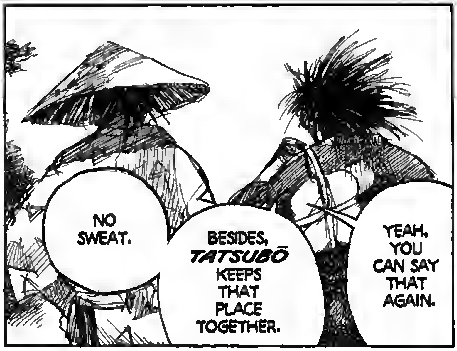
.....
.....
.....
SORRY. DON'T KNOW HIM.
TRY SOMEONE ELSE.
I COULD TELL HE WAS LYING.
BUT WHAT I DON'T GET IS... WHY DID HE *NEED* TO LIE?
SO I *ACTED* LIKE A STUDENT. FIGURED MAYBE IF I *LIVED* WITH HIM, HE'D SHOW HIS TRUE COLORS...
MAKE HIM TALK? *THAT* GUY? NO WAY.

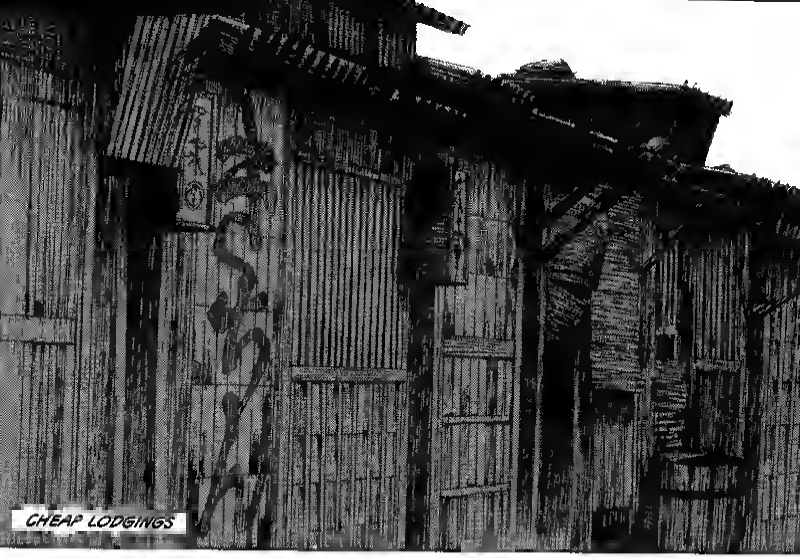
DAMN, THE KID'S SHARP. BUT IF SŌRI-*SENSEI* WANTS TO PLAY HIM THAT WAY...
...I WON'T GET INVOLVED.

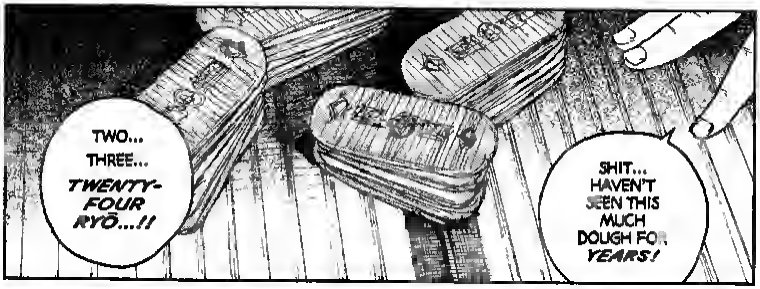
SO, MAGATSU... IS THIS COOL? US HITTING THE ROAD?
HUH?

WHADDA YA MEAN, "HUH?"
YOU'RE HIS *STUDENT*, RIGHT? AND YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE GUARDING HIS *HOUSE!*


HEH, HEH... SPEAKING OF SWEET LITTLE TATSU, MANJI MY FRIEND...
I HEARD SHE WAS YOUR "MOMMY" WHEN YOU WERE SICK.
!?!
YOU--!
WAH, THAT LITTLE-- HOW MUCH DID SHE TELL YOU?!


NO SWEAT.
BESIDES, *TATSUBŌ* KEEPS THAT PLACE TOGETHER.
YEAH, YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

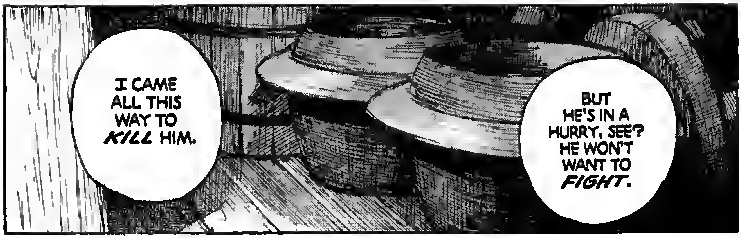

CHEAP LODGINGS


TWO... THREE... TWENTY-FOUR RYŌ...!!
SHIT... HAVEN'T SEEN THIS MUCH DOUGH FO. YEARS!

EIGHT EACH...
YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE, MAN. YOU REALLY SERIOUS?

HEH, HEH... WHY NOT?
I LIVE MODESTLY.

SO... GOT IT? ONE EYE. SCAR LIKE THIS. HE'S ALL I WANT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYONE ELSE WITH HIM.


I CAME ALL THIS WAY TO KILL HIM.
BUT HE'S IN A HURRY, SEE? HE WON'T WANT TO FIGHT.

THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN. WON'T TAKE MUCH-- JUST GET IN THE WAY A LITTLE.
SLOW HIM DOWN.

ONCE THE SWORDS COME OUT...
...SIT BACK AND ENJOY. I DON'T NEED HELP.
EASY, YES?
Uh... SO WE JUST, Uh...
LIKE... HOW GOOD IS THIS GUY?
I MEAN, I SHOULDN'T SAY THIS AFTER TAKING YOUR MONEY, BUT...
...IF WE'RE RISKING OUR LIVES... Y'KNOW?
EIGHT RYŌ'S PRETTY... GENER-OUS.
TRUST ME, GUYS.
IT'S ALL COOL.

...BUT TWO OF YOU CAN TAKE HIM, EASY.
OKAY, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ONE-ON-ONE...
IN THAT CASE...
YEAH, BUT...
WHY ALL OF US? AND ALL THIS CASH? I MEAN, IF HE'S JUST--
HMM
YOU STUPID ASSHOLES ARE DRIVING ME NUTS!!
QUIT JERKING AROUND!! ARE YOU IN OR OUT?!
NO FREE RIDES IN LIFE, MAN!
DECIDE! NOW !!

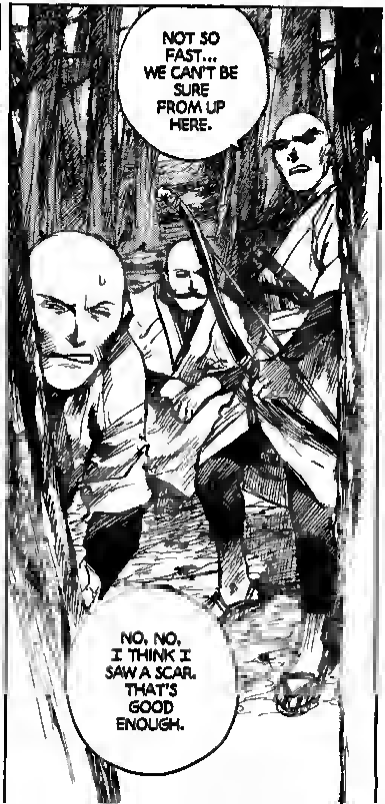
.....
.....
.....
GEE, Uh... SORRY. I GUESS... YEAH.
WE WANT THE MONEY.
IT'S WEIRD, MANJI...
WHAT IS?

A FEW DAYS AGO, THEY SAID THERE WERE "WANTED" POSTERS.
YOU AND YOUR LITTLE FRIEND, ALL OVER KOBOTOKE.
SO? MAYBE IT WAS JUST A RUMOR.
BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY...
YOU DISAPPOINTED OR SOMETHING?
HMM... COME TO THINK OF IT...

THAT IS KIND OF STRANGE. AND OTHER STUFF'S BEEN BUGGING ME... SURE, WE GOT TEGATA.
BUT THE SEKISHO WAS STILL TOO EASY. YEAH, MAGATSU'S PASSING ME OFF AS ITTŌ-RYŪ. BUT ONE LOOK AT THIS FACE... RIGHT?
SOME-ONE'S PULLING STRINGS.
HMM. MAYBE... IT'S HER?
SHE TOLD HER BOSSES I'M A KENKYAKU OUT TO KILL ANOTSU?
MAKING UP FOR THE LAST TIME...? DAMN, SHE'S A CUNNING BITCH.
WHEW... WE'VE PUT ON SOME MILES. IF I WALK ALL THE WAY TO KAGA WITH YOU...
...I'LL FEEL LIKE A REAL DUMB-SHIT.

WE'LL REACH UENOHARA SOON.
BUT I DON'T SUPPOSE...
THAT WE'LL TAKE A BREAK? NOT A CHANCE, KIDDO.
YOU'RE DUMB ENOUGH ALREADY! TWO DAYS?
IT TAKES A GROWN MAN TEN DAYS TO GET THERE! HOLD YOUR DAMN HORSES, PUNK!
YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT...?
NOPE! WE'RE NOT STOPPING UNTIL KONISHI, FOUR MORE ON! START WALKING!
WELL, SHIT.
HOW COME YOU'RE ALL STEAMED UP?
IT PISSES ME OFF JUST WATCHING YOU.
ALL WORKED UP OVER SOME GIRL...

SHE'S YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE YOUR SISTER, TOO!
I HATE THAT, MAN. HATE IT.
IT'S LIKE LOOKING IN A MIRROR
YOU TALK TOO FRIGGIN' MUCH!


NOT SO FAST... WE CAN'T BE SURE FROM UP HERE.
NO. NO. I THINK I SAW A SCAR. THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH.

AND THE OTHER GUY? WHO'S HE?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? JUST SHOOT THE DAMN ARROW!
KRK
TUNG

ZZG!
KIDD

FWHP

STAY RIGHT THERE, YOU BASTARDS !!

TO BE CONTINUED...!

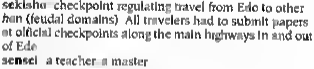
LETTERS

send letters to:

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS,
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222
www.darkhorse.com - blade@darkhorse.com - www.studioproteus.com

GLOSSARY

Hakone, **Kobotoke**: the names of *seki* (checkpoints) along the major byways. Hakone in particular guarding the mountain approaches to Edo from the south, was one of the most rigorous in feudal Japan.
Itto ryu: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.
Kaga: A remote feudal domain on the Japan Sea coast southwest of Edo.
ronin: a masterless samurai.
ryo: a gold piece.
sekisho: checkpoint regulating travel from Edo to other *han* (feudal domains). All travelers had to submit papers at official checkpoints along the main highways in and out of Edo.
sensei: a teacher, a master.
tegata (*tsukō tegata*): official travel pass for transiting *sekisho*.



That was an intense ending to a fairly slow day, huh? Don't worry — it looks as if next month's issue will have more than enough bloodshed for everybody. Wish we could say the same about posters! Wow, we can't believe the massive amount of responses we received because of the POSTER CONTEST. Here are the winners!

If this were the cliché opening of a fan letter, it would say "I'm a big fan of *Blade of the Immortal*." Not that this statement isn't true, but that it's not enough, is why I won't use it.

Konichiwa, Mina-san. You all should realize by now that *Blade of the Immortal* is not a comic book, but a work of art. I enjoy a select few comics currently in print. Of those, *Blade of the Immortal* is the first that I seek out at the local comics store, and the last that I grudgingly put down before bed. After the first three issues, I requested a regular order of *Bolt*. Dark Horse Comics is to be praised for picking up Hiroaki Samura, but they can't supply his work fast enough. (Thank you Dark Horse, I know you are trying hard.)

Otaku? Yes, I am. I've turned away from just about every comic on the market that is in color or has "heroes" in tights. Samura's sketch style, along with the blend of current slang, and feudal gore has hooked me for life (alas, I am not Immortal.) He has redefined black and white art in comic books, and I hope everyone is watching closely. His characters are flawed, emotion filled, and utterly human, and, without a doubt, impressive.

Hiroaki Samura has tainted my soul with his artistry, and I shall forever be in his debt for opening my eyes to a beautiful style that I would never have considered successful before now. I can only hope that Samura has more in store for us.

Arigato, Hiroaki Samura.

Matthew Barrett
Chandler, Arizona

Matthew, we're only going to say this once: a comic book IS a work of art. Thanks for your letter. Enjoy your poster. (That's a work of art, too — by the way.)

Dear *Blade of the Immortal*

I have been reading *Blade* for a while now. It is the one comic I still eagerly await every month. I am in awe of each issue I have read. The layouts and the action are inspiring. I have no idea how a person can come up with such a wonderful visual flow. No matter how visually exciting this book is, the story itself is far more intriguing. I love the action, but what kept me reading was the interpersonal relationships.

When I first started reading this book, I was frustrated because each issue seemed so short. After I thought about it, there were two reasons for that. First, I was so used to other comics that have far more unnecessary text. This *Blade* is not afraid to let the panels tell their own visual story. When I realized this, I was shocked that I could gather all the information necessary without having everything dictated to me. And yet, some of my favorite panels are the ones where the text only loosely relates to the imagery in the panel. Like when a character is speaking instead of looking at the speaker's face we see their hands or their feet.

I don't know; maybe these things are standards in Japanese comics, but it is definitely not normal in American comics.

Emily Mann
via e-mail

I think it's safe to say that *Blade of the Immortal* is exceptional in both America and Japan. You make some good observations about Samura's storytelling. Hope you like the poster!

Hello. I've been a fan of *Blade* for some time now. My first encounter with the series was a poster released by 1000 Editions a few years ago. I bought the poster having never read the comic. The art and character design blew me away. I bought the first ten comics the next day. I've bought every issue since then. The character design and attention to detail are top notch! It would be great to have Hiroaki Samura make an appearance at an anime or comic con on the East Coast sometime! *Blade of the Immortal* and *Lone Wolf & Cub* are my favorite comics, both released here by Dark Horse. Thanks for the hard work bringing this awesome series to the States. I look forward to each new issue. I'll buy 'em as long as you release 'em! Thanks.

Eric Bickle
Raleigh, North Carolina

Guess what, Eric — you've got yourself another poster! And that's all of our postee winners. If you didn't win a poster, be sure to check back here next month because we'll be giving away *Blade of the Immortal* stickee packs to two more lucky letter writers!

See you in thirty!
— Tim EG and Mike C

NEXT ISSUE:

Next month — The killing frost, part two of "Fell Frost."

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#73
$2.99 US
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FALL FROST 1 OF 5
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Immortal Scanner

Nice enough to distro the stuff
Thanks BTW

THE STORY SO FAR

- Series: Blade of the Immortal
- Date: 2003 08.09
- Volume: ???
- Chapter: 073
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- Last Rls: Blade of the Immortal issue 079

Here's another issue of BotI. Hopefully it's right after the last TPB. well at least according to the irc Memo. Well, enjoy those sometimes informative but usually never informative letter section at the end of every issue. Something they leave out in the TPBs. There are pages missing, due to them being ads. The filesize is already big so, I've omitted them.